

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNCIL

6 June 2018

Report of the Strategic Director Commissioning, Communities and Policy

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICE STRATEGY

1. Purpose of the Report

To present Council with an overview of the Public Library Service Strategy.

2. Information and Analysis

At its meeting on Thursday 5th April Cabinet approved proposals to commence a 12 week consultation on a draft Public Library Service Strategy, 'Libraries for Derbyshire' and to send details of the draft strategy to the Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The important role of the Library Service is acknowledged by the commitment to the service expressed in the Council Plan 2017-2021. Across Derbyshire, libraries serve as community hubs. They have a proven track record of working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders; they are trusted community spaces, free to enter and open to all and they are highly valued by local communities and partners.

Whilst the important role of the library service has been recognised in the Council Plan, it does not make the service immune from the financial challenges and demand pressures facing the Council, e.g. inflation and growing demands on services for older people and vulnerable children continue to contribute to year-on-year demands being in excess of the funding streams available to the Council. On 20 July 2017 Cabinet approved a reduction to the library service budget up to 2021 of £1.6 million

A predominantly building-based service, with 45 static libraries in a variety of accommodation fully funded by the County Council, the current delivery model, is increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of changing patterns of use and the financial challenges being experienced by the Council.

In Derbyshire, unlike in some other authorities, no static libraries have closed in the past 28 years and a number of new, replacement libraries have been built, e.g. Glossop, Ashbourne and Heanor libraries with a new library planned for Belper, due to open summer 2019. In terms of library performance, between 2012/13 and 2016/17 book issues in saw a reduction of 33%, in line with the national trend, and there was a 21% decline in physical visits. However, it is acknowledged that the reduction in the size of the mobile fleet, from ten vehicles to two, will be a contributing factor to the overall decline in total issues and visits across the service. The overall reduction in use has been partly offset by an increase in remote use of digital resources.

The proposed strategy for the library service is fully informed by the evidence gathered through undertaking a comprehensive Library Service Needs Assessment (included in the original Cabinet report).

The draft strategy has also been shaped and influenced by the advice and guidance published by the Libraries Taskforce and Arts Council England (ACE), as well as the extensive work undertaken by other library authorities across England. The recommendations and outcomes of national reviews of library services, principally the Independent Library Report for England 2014 have also been considered.

The proposed draft strategy for the library service remains consistent with the County Council's statutory duty, its own aspirations as expressed in the Council Plan and the evidence of need demonstrated by the Library Service Needs Assessment. The aim is to provide a sustainable, customer and community focused service for the future embedded in the heart of local communities that matches the County Council's aspirations. *The strategy does not propose the closure of any libraries whilst ensuring that the Council can prioritise where it provides funding.*

Through a wide ranging public consultation the Council is seeking feedback on the following proposals:

1. To transfer 20 libraries to community management which could see community groups take responsibility for delivering the library service in the following locations:

Borrowash
Etwell
Clowne
Duffield
Creswell
Brimington
Whaley Bridge

Killamarsh
Melbourne
Hadfield
Holmewood
Gamesley
Whitwell
Wingerworth

Pinxton
Hayfield
Tideswell
Old Whittington
Somercotes
Woodville

This proposed model, with no closures, would ensure that access to a total of 45 static libraries would be maintained. No Derbyshire resident should have to travel any further than they currently do to access a service. Potentially the community management model could offer increased access to library services e.g. in the form of improved opening hours.

2. To implement a tiered approach to library service provision. Tiering provides a framework in which resources can be allocated and managed across the library service in a clear and consistent way e.g. staffing, materials fund.
3. To reduce weekly opening hours at the 25 libraries remaining under local authority management.
4. To reduce the Materials Fund.
5. To consult community organisations on providing an alternative delivery model for the Mobile Library Service.
6. To consider the future implementation of 'Smart Libraries'. These are libraries where the latest technology allows customers to enter locked buildings, use their library card and a PIN, to borrow books and log on to the internet without staff being present
7. To stop providing a DVD loan service.

The provisional timetable for the consultation and start of the implementation of the proposed strategy, subject to the outcome of the consultation and further Cabinet approval, is outlined below.

Indicative timeline	
What	When
Public consultation starts	May 2018
Public consultation ends	July 2018
Analysis of feedback completed	Autumn 2018
Proposal presented to Cabinet	Autumn/Winter 2018
Strategy implementation	January 2019 onwards

3. Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been

considered: financial equality of opportunity, health, human resources, environmental, transport, social value, property and crime and disorder considerations.

4. Background Papers

Cabinet 5 April 2018 Report of the Strategic Director – Commissioning, Communities and Policy Public Library Service Strategy (Strategic Leadership, Culture and Tourism)

5. Officer's Recommendations

That Council notes the report on the Public Library Service Strategy.

**Emma Alexander, Strategic Director,
Commissioning, Communities and Policy**